

## RAYANKA

Requested by Kate Albertson: “I would like you to include the surname **Rayanka**. Could this be the feminine form of **Rajtar**? **Rayanka** is the name that has been passed down in the family for my G-Grandfather’s mother—but I can not find that surname in the parish in which he was born nor in the surrounding villages, that is why I was asking about **Rajtar**. The villages are in Galicia outside of Mielitz.”

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It’s not likely **Rayanka** could come from *Rajtar*. The *-tar* part would not drop off before the addition of the ending *-anka*. The name **Rajtar** might show up feminine form as *Rajtarka* or *Rajtarowa*, perhaps even *Rajtarzanka* or *Rajtorzanka*. But *Rayanka* doesn’t fit—at least not by any normal rules. Of course, names were sometimes distorted or mangled past all recognition. But a Pole would not consider *Rayanka* or *Rajanka* a form of *Rajtar*.

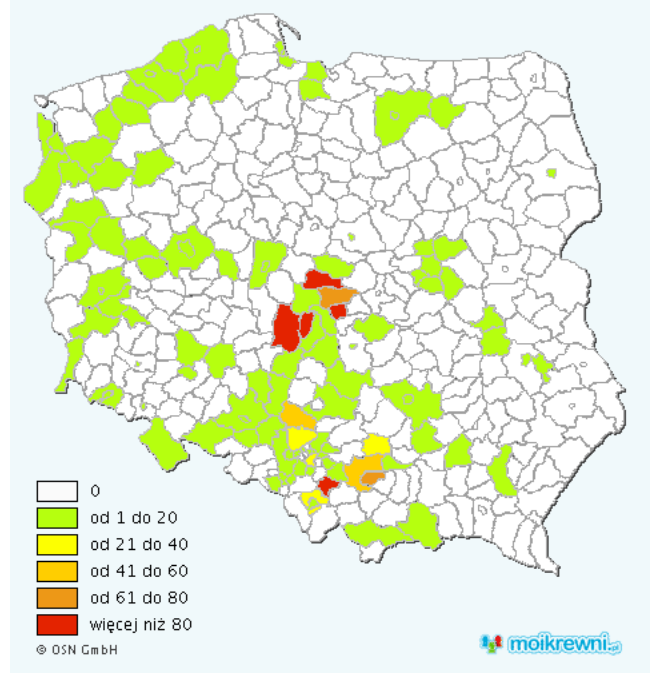
First, let’s deal with the spelling of *Rayanka*. In older Polish you might see that spelling, but in modern times *y* is never used as a consonant, only as a vowel. Poles use *j* for the sound we spell as consonantal *y*. So **Rajanka** is the form we’d expect to see in modern times.

Neither the 2002 data used by the Moikrewni Web site (<http://www.moikrewni.pl/mapa/>) nor the 1990 data on the site <http://www.herby.com.pl/indexslo.html> has any listing for *Rajanka* or *Rayanka*. A search for *RAJ* on the latter site, which returns all names in the database beginning *Raj-*, shows one Pole named **Rajane** living somewhere in Katowice province; the Moikrewni site does not include the name. It is possible *Rajanka* could be a form of that name, since the ending *-a* is used in some grammatical forms and the *-e-* would drop out when an ending is added. But it seems a bit of a long shot.

In Galicia, we often see *-anka* added to surnames to create a feminine form. This isn’t standard Polish, it’s definitely a dialect feature, virtually unknown in modern Poland. But we run into it in old records all the time. I think our best bet is to regard *Rajanka* as a feminine form of the surname **Raj**, meaning “Miss Raj.” That is a thoroughly plausible scenario, and the one that strikes me intuitively as most likely. Let’s look at that.

The Moikrewni site has a page with data and a map showing the frequency and distribution of the surname **Raj** (<http://www.moikrewni.pl/mapa/kompletny/raj.html>). As of 2002 there were 1,614 Polish citizens by that name, living all over Poland, with the largest numbers in the central part of the country, especially the counties of Sieradz (162), Oświęcim (137), municipal Łódź (135), Łęczyca (134), Zduńska Wola (81), municipal Kraków (79), Zgierz (69), and Kraków (47).

The map at right shows that this name is not terribly common in former Galicia, which included what is now southeastern Poland. There are some Raj



Map showing the distribution of the surname **Raj** as of 2002.

in that area, however. I have a CD of the 2002 data used by Moikrewni, and it shows there were three people named Raj living in Mielec county of Podkarpackie province, as well as some in the counties of Rzeszów, Nowy Targ, Nowy Sącz, and Kraków.

I'd suggest trying to get in touch with those Rajs in Mielec county. I don't have access to further details such as first names or addresses; but there may be a way to get that info. There is a government office in Poland that has on file the addresses of all people currently living in Poland:

Wydział Udostępniania Informacji w Departamencie Spraw Obywatelskich MSWiA  
02-672 Warszawa  
ul Domaniewska 36/38  
POLAND

You can write in English, though writing in Polish would probably get an answer faster; and in any case, the response will be in Polish. My understanding is that this office contacts Polish citizens with the name in question and asks for their permission to give out their address. If that person says no, that's the end of it; but if he or she says yes, the office will send you that information, and you can try writing to him or her, if you wish. Obviously this is no help if a name is scattered all over the country, or you don't know what area to search in. But in instances where a name is highly concentrated in one area, or a researcher knows exactly which area to look in, I pass the info along. If this office does succeed in providing you with addresses, chances are very good those addresses belong to relatives. It may be worth a try.

If you write people by this name, your chances of getting a reply are better if you write in Polish, of course. You can hire a translator—probably the best way to go—or you can try to put together a very basic letter in comprehensible Polish by using any of the various Polish Letter Writing Guides online. The original Guide is the one put together by the LDS Family History Library, available here:

[http://www.familysearch.org/ENG/Search/rg/images/36339\\_LWGPolish.pdf](http://www.familysearch.org/ENG/Search/rg/images/36339_LWGPolish.pdf)

Or this one may be easier to access:

[http://www.polishroots.org/letters/letters\\_polish.htm](http://www.polishroots.org/letters/letters_polish.htm)

To sum up, I think the most likely explanation here is that *Rayanka* is an archaic spelling of *Rajanka*, which is a form used in some areas by females whose maiden name is or was *Raj*. That's not a certainty, but it's what seems most plausible, based on the info I was able to find. If nothing else, it may give you a lead worth following up.